

There can be no Church without a Pre-

late.

FIFTH LETTER TO DR. WAINWRIGHT.

REV. AND DEAR SIR.—The intervention of the

duties of the Sabbath has delayed a reply to your

last communication. I proceed now to pay my

respects to it.

"To the hard words you have felt at liberty to

use, I reply, nothing; to your reasoning, this."

I am in possession of abundant evidence,

given to me personally by members and ministers

of various denominations of Christians, including

a number of your own, that it is very generally

desired by this community that the nature and

grounds of the monopolizing claims of high-

church partisans should be examined, and, if un-

just, exposed. However, therefore, I might feel

myself justified in refusing any reply to your last

communication, because of its angry and lordly

tone, I am quite resolved that none of these

things shall ruffle my temper, or deter me from

what I conceive to be an important duty. I in-

tend to go forward with my object, although it is

very evident that in doing so I am acting in op-

position to the wishes of yourself and your friends.

II. I cannot agree with you that there is ne-

cessarily any thing "unworthy" of the Christian

or ministerial calling in making a respectable

public journal the medium of communication

with the public mind, upon a topic which was

thought of sufficient importance to be introduced

to the public attention first at a dinner table, and

then, by report, through the daily prints. Is it

too sacred for the one, then I appeal to you whether

it was not too sacred for the other. This

should have been considered beforehand, and the

consequences—apparently so disagreeable to you

—should not be laid at the door of him who feels

bound to call in question a public and most offen-

sive attack, as publicly as it was made. Whether

it was or was not an attack, and even a def-

iance, against unoffending Christian denomina-

tions, whose several church relations are very

dear to them, must now be left to the decision of

the reader. To threaten me contingently with a

charge of *slander*, for re-reading what is so

perfectly clear even to members of your own

church, who have sought me out to speak of this

matter, will not alter the truth or frighten me

from calling things by their right names. I re-

gret, with you, that this or any similar discus-

sion has originated, just as I regret that a neces-

sity should ever arise for the resistance of false

and injurious principles or oppressive exactions

of any kind. I regret that there is injustice in

the world, and that there are insidious or violent

assaults against God's truth; but since such

things do exist, I do not regret that individuals

can be found to whom the purity and integrity of

truth are so much more valuable than a peace

bought at the cost of a dastardly submission to

error that they are willing to risk "the rabid

remarks of licentious tongues and pens," and

even worse evils. Such results are to be expected

when a contest for great principles takes place,

and I do not deny that they are to be ranked

among those injurious things referred to by the

Saviour under the name of "offences," which

He says must needs occur, but of which—be it

observed—He throws the whole responsibility

upon those who wilfully occasion them.

III. Without retorting any of the discursive

language with which it would seem you desired

to anger me, I shall now take the liberty of stat-

ing the reasons why your refusal to define your

position, by defining in your own language the

terms you have used, is to be considered as a vir-

tual shrinking from the contest for which you

have so often professed your readiness and con-

fidence. In the first place, you are violating the

admitted rule of dialectics which requires before-

hand unambiguous definitions of all the promi-

nent terms that are to be employed in a discussion.

The justice of this rule is obvious to any one;

for without such explicit definitions, it will be

easy for an opponent, when pressed by an argu-

ment founded upon the supposed sense of his own

terms, to escape by affirming that he did not use

them in that sense. But in the next place, we

are discussing this point in the presence of the

ford Tractist. "How," he asks, "can we be

justly charged with unchurching those who were

never church members?" Instead of making good your

denial, or justifying your threat of holding me re-

sponsible for *slander*, the passage in your letter

now referred to only repeats the offence, with ag-

gravations. "Be quiet, take the matter coolly,"

says an arrogant gentleman who publicly smites

another in the face—"you have no right to resist,

for you are a worthless fellow, and for that reason

I would have you know that I did not strike you

—you struck yourself." This would hardly prove

a satisfactory mode of adjusting an insult.

I happen to be acquainted with the "un-

answered and unanswerable" arguments and state-

ments of Dr. Hobart and Dr. Bowden, and there-

fore decline any benefit from the plea of "igno-

rance," which you politely suggest. Still not

having "implicitly followed Dr. Mason and Dr.

Miller," greatly as I admire them both, I will, of

course, be the more open to the prospective illu-

mination so kindly promised me.

This, I believe, is all that I need to say, in jus-

tification of the course I have taken, and from the

farther prosecution of which I am not to be de-

terred by abusive epithets, or charges of unworthy

motives, no matter from what source they come.

Those who know me know that nothing but a

sense of duty can have prompted me to depart so

far from my ordinary habits as a man of peace.

Forbearance has a limit.

And now I shall proceed to state the question,

as clearly as I can, hoping that the reader may,

ere long, come to a more distinct understanding

as to your views of the point at issue. Many

persons will not believe that your words mean

all that they appear to affirm. Let them have

an opportunity of judging, from your own pen.

The language of your proposition is well known

by this time—but I will repeat it:—"There can

be no church without a prelate."

I refer the reader to my last letter for the true

sense of the words "church" and "Bishop," when

used by high-church prelatists. I will not, there-

fore, repeat them here. Thus understood, I pro-

ceed to redeem my pledge, and to show that in

its nature and consequences this position, though

so confidently assumed, is *unscriptural*.

I wish that two considerations may be kept in

view throughout my remarks, for they are neces-

sary for a right understanding of my position.

(1.) That I am not, in this discussion, the ad-

vocate of the ecclesiastical polity of that part of

the Christian Church to which I consider it an

honor to belong, except so far as that

polity involves the ministerial rights of presby-

ters, or parochial (i. e. parish or congregational)

Bishops. In affirming their rights, I affirm the

rights of the presbyters of all anti-prelatical

churches. (II.) I am not assailing the views of

those of our fellow-Christians who believe that

prelacy is scriptural and expedient, but who do

not believe that it is so enjoyed in scripture as to

be a *sine qua non* in the constitution of the Church

of Christ; and who accordingly admit that the

order of a Presbyterian ministry is valid, though

not the best order. With such I am not contend-

ing; we agree to differ; we concede to them

what they concede to us, a legitimate standing in

the catholic church. The dogma which I have

undertaken to resist and expose, is that which

makes prelacy *essential* to the very being of the

church, so that without prelacy there is no church,

and of course, no valid ministry and ordinances,

no promises of God, no lawful reliance upon God's

grace, no covenanted mercies, and no just and

certain hope of reaching Heaven. This is the

dogma which you have received from Papist

hands, and which I hold to be at war with the

spirit and letter of the word of God.

I. Because there is no warrant from the Word

of God for making any particular external form

of polity a condition of that Christian fellowship

and communion with God, which are the distin-

guishing duties and privileges of the Church of

Christ.

If there be such a warrant, produce it. The

burden of proof rests on you. Let any one ex-

amine the tenor of the preaching of Christ and

Christian body a unity in respect to form? or not

rather a unity in faith and love for the same

grand moving truths of the Gospel? Do none be-

long to the body of Christ, his church, but such

as agree with us in every thing? And if differ-

ences are allowable, as you must admit, shall we

restrict our communion to those who do not hold

our views of church order, although they may

hold every thing else? In one word, is it not a

sin against the spirituality of Christianity, that

we should elevate conformity to what we deem

true views of church order to a level with the

weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy

and faith?

I cannot but think so. And strong as are my

preferences for a particular form of government,

I dare not deny, as you have done, that the man

who is "a Christian" is by that very fact a mem-

ber of Christ's church. You are bound to these

alternatives: either to admit the covenant rela-

tions of other Christian churches, or by denying

them, to admit that God has poured out his bless-

ings, and raised up hosts of eminent, learned, de-

voted and useful Christians, among Christian bo-

dies which were never in covenant with him. If,

as you will not deny, he has actually done the